

**COLUMBUS RECREATION AND PARKS MASTER PLAN**

**FOR THE**

**CITY OF COLUMBUS, OHIO**

**DECEMBER 2002**

## **CHAPTER**

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Chapter 2: ..... Demographic/Community Overview

Chapter 3: ..... Programs, Parks, and Facilities

Chapter 4: ..... Needs Assessment

Chapter 5: ..... Recommendations

CHAPTER 6: ..... ACTION PLAN

## PLAN PARTICIPANTS

### Office of the Mayor

- Michael B. Coleman

### Columbus City Council

- Matthew D. Habash, *President*
- Michael C. Mentel, *President Pro-tem*
- Kevin Boyce
- Maryellen O'Shaughnessy
- Richard W. Sensenbrenner
- Charleta B. Tavares
- Patsy A. Thomas

### Recreation and Parks Commission Members

- Jerry Saunders, *President*
- Lorraine Brock
- Frank W. Casto
- Kathy Duffy Espy
- Lynn A. Greer
- Archie M. Griffin
- Eugene Harper, Jr.
- Thomas L. Kaplin
- Ellen Larrimer Tripp

### Recreation and Parks Staff and the Core Group

- Wayne A. Roberts, *Executive Director*
- Patty Harris, *Assistant Director*
- Mark Young, *Assistant Director*
- Carl Calcara
- Ron Eaton
- Terri Leist
- Maureen Lorenz
- Alan McKnight
- Deborah Locklear-Oglesby
- Gary Serelson
- Andy Wells
- Jean Winters

### The Columbus Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee

- Gary L. Baker, II, *Greater Hilltop, Chairman\**
- John Best, *Far North Coalition\**
- Maurice Blake, *Columbus Board of Education\**
- Shirley Bowen, *Serving at-Large\**
- Paul Carringer, *Clintonville*
- Dan Charles, *Southside C.A.N.*
- Paul Cianelli, *Victorian Village*

- John T. Coats, Sr., *Driving Park\**
- Taletha Davis-Jones, *North Central\**
- Don Haydon, *Columbus Board of Education\**
- Mike Hurd, *Westland\**
- Mary Jenkins, *Near East*
- JoEllen Locke, *Westland\**
- Peggy McElroy, *Northwest\**
- Johnathon Mills, *East Fifth Avenue*
- Peggy Murphy, *Krumm Park Area*
- Michelle Park, *Ohio Parks and Recreation Association\**
- Acy Lee Robinson, *Driving Park\**
- Michael Rosen, *German Village/Far East\**
- Don Schmidt, *Ohio Parks and Recreation Association\**
- Jim Schwochow, *North Linden\**
- Carol Stewart, *Franklinton\**
- Ron Stewart, *Northeast*
- Steve Thompson, *Northland*
- Lisa Thurber, *Far North Columbus Communities\**
- Ellen Larrimer Tripp, *Recreation and Parks Commission\**
- Clark Valentine, *South Linden*
- Judy White, *Southeast\**
- Tilly Woods-Allen, *Serving at-Large*

\*Working Group Member

## Stakeholders

- Matt Habash, *Council and Commissioner*
- Gene Harper, *Commissioner*
- Wayne A. Roberts, *Director*
- Jerry Saunders, *Commissioner*
- Lynn Greer, *Commissioner*
- Ellen Tripp, *Commissioner*
- Kathy Espy, *Commissioner*
- Mayor Coleman
- Chad Jester, *Nationwide Insurance*
- Larry James, *Attorney*
- Steve Wittman
- Ken Danter, *Danter Company*
- John Wolfe, *Columbus Dispatch*
- Cathy Mayne-Lyttle, *Worthington Indust*

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- Roy A. Jaynes
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- 
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- Diane Kaiser
- Ron Kyser
- Joanne Leussing
- Jeanne Likins
- John Lind, Jr.
- Bill Lochner
- Pat Marida
- Bud McKinney
- Russ Merritt
- Larry Metzger
- Rob Meyer
- Erin Miller
- Sara Murphy
- Diane Nance
- Chuck O'Conner
- Larry Peck
- Courtney Penn
- Micki Pike
- Paul Redman
- John Rosenberger
- Zorba Ross
- Tony Schorr
- Phil Schroeder
- Kathryn R. Simon
- Steve Sterrett
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- Michael Yonnotti

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## INTRODUCTION

### MASTER PLAN PURPOSE AND DESIGN

The *Columbus Recreation and Parks Master Plan* has been designed as a **tool to guide future decisions and actions** by the City of Columbus, Ohio, and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD).

The plan's purpose is to:

- **Evaluate** existing programs, parks, facilities, and services; and
- **Recommend** new or enhanced programs, parks, facilities, and services.

The master planning process also has involved defining the **vision** of the community and the CRPD, establishing CRPD **policies**, and developing a **framework** for growth and development through the year 2010.

The master planning process relied heavily on **public involvement**. An **Advisory Group** as well as **focus groups** and **stakeholders** provided direct input into the plan. **Public input meetings** were held, and **household and customer satisfaction surveys** were conducted to define important issues and determine public sentiment.

The **Columbus community at large** directly affected the master planning process. During public input meetings, conducted on several evenings during September 2000 and May 2001, discussion focused on the community's needs. Participants expressed positive opinions about the CRPD—and ways it could improve services.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT

The *Columbus Recreation and Parks Master Plan* is organized into the following components:

- **Introduction.** Gives the purpose and design of the master plan, explains how the master plan document is organized, and provides general observations.

- **Chapter 1: Overview.** Provides background information on the City of Columbus and the CRPD.
- **Chapter 2: Demographic/Community Overview.** Lays the foundation for the master plan by documenting the locations of existing populations and their different needs, and describing the community in detail.
- **Chapter 3: Programs, Parks, and Facilities.** Provides the findings and conclusions of a comprehensive survey of existing recreation programs, parks, and facilities.
- **Chapter 4: Needs Assessment.** Determines what programs, parks, and facilities are lacking.
- **Chapter 5: Recommendations.** Outlines the new or enhanced programs, parks, and facilities that should be implemented.
- **Chapter 6: Action Plan.** Details how and when to implement the recommendations outlined in Chapter 5.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The master planning process required conducting a **system-wide analysis** of recreation and parks. The process was structured to span an entire year so programs could be evaluated during all seasons: winter, spring, summer, and fall.

The following **general observations** made during the master planning process will be explained in detail in this master plan:

- The public **does not clearly understand the CRPD's** role and mission.
  - Any compromises to the operations and maintenance budget for facilities would **drastically affect the public's image and perception** of CRPD.
  - While generally the public is **satisfied with the CRPD's programs and facilities**, there is still room for improvement.
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- Because CRPD has administrative offices in different buildings, there are **lost efficiencies and missed opportunities**.
  - There are **core services** that the CRPD should offer free to the public, and there are **premium services** for which the public should be charged.
  - Because the system used for planning, analysis, and decision making by the City of Columbus and Franklin County involves as many as 30 Planning Areas, the need exists for a **more manageable system**.

**LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN...**

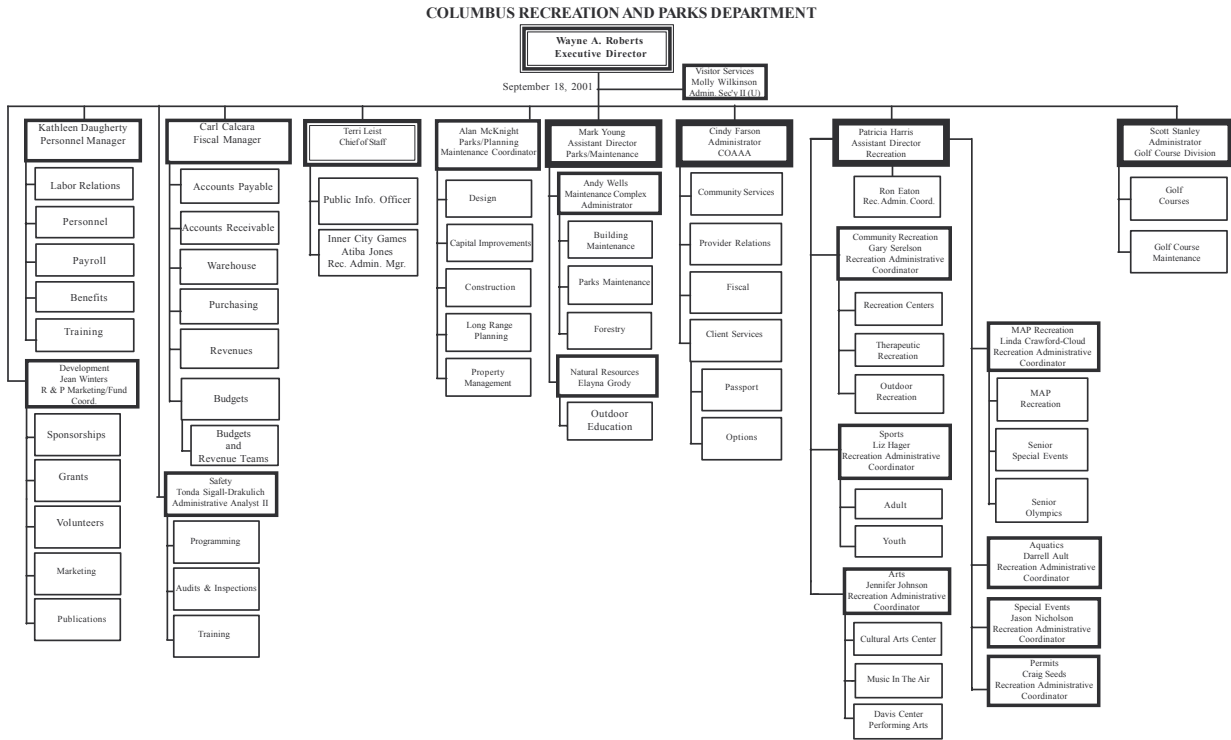
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**Figure 1-1  
Columbus Organizational Chart**



# CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

## CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE ... NATURALLY

**The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD) mission statement** represents the strong partnership the department feels between itself and the Columbus community:

*“To create and maintain an enjoyable, safe, aesthetically pleasing and healthful environment for residents and visitors; to divert negative, expensive behaviors by providing positive economical and convenient leisure opportunities; to promote the preservation and wise use of natural resources; and to enhance the local economy through parks, recreation programs, festivals, tournaments, tourist attractions and special events.”*

**The CRPD places great value on the families and individuals that use the city’s programs, parks, and facilities.** By listening to the community’s comments and opinions, the CRPD has been able to assess how it has been performing. This approach will allow the CRPD to build upon previous successes while focusing on elements that need attention. **Clearly, public interest and input are the proactive forces that have shaped and guided this master plan.**

### BACKGROUND: COLUMBUS, OHIO

**Located in the heart of the Midwest, the City of Columbus is the state capital of Ohio.** A center of trade and commerce, Columbus is served by two major interstate highways, I-71 and I-70, along with Port Columbus International Airport. Columbus, located in Franklin County, is also home to one of the largest universities in the United States: The Ohio State University.

**Columbus has been experiencing a downtown renaissance**—a symbol of growth and prosperity. For example, the recent completion of the new Nationwide Arena and

renovations to the convention center and the Ohio Statehouse have contributed to Columbus’ image as a growing and vibrant city.

**Columbus competes with other Midwest cities of comparable size.** Recently, efforts have been made to boost Columbus’ status. These include:

- Strengthening neighborhoods;
- Retaining existing businesses while attracting new companies;
- Generating positive economic growth; and
- Taking steps to improve residents’ quality of life.

Thus, Columbus is poised as an important metropolitan center.

**Recreation and parks play an important role in the life of Columbus residents.** The slogan of the National Recreation and Parks Association—“Recreation and Parks: The Benefits are Endless”—certainly holds true for Columbus. **Now more than ever, prospective residents of all ages and cultures—as well as longtime residents—demand that leisure services and facilities be integrated into the city’s fabric.**

### OVERVIEW OF THE COLUMBUS RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

**Columbus residents benefit from the many programs, parks, facilities, services, and activities that CRPD provides.** (See the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department Organization Chart in **Figure 1-1.**) The CRPD staff works with citizens, agencies, and organizations to help build community pride for parks through education, special events, and volunteer opportunities. In fact, residents enjoy some very special amenities and opportunities that other communities lack. These include:

- A total of **14,000 acres** (9,000 acres of land and 5,000 acres of water) within the CRPD system that hosts parks, golf courses, conservation areas, reservoirs, and the Columbus Zoo.
- As many as **28 recreation centers** programmed and operated by CRPD.

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- **11 swimming pools** (10 outdoor and one indoor).
- Central Ohio's only **sports pad**, a specially designed facility to comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This sports pad is located at Rhodes Park.
- The only **topiary interpretation of a painting** in existence, located at Deaf School Park, where sculpted shrubs mimic Georges Seurat's painting, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*.
- The only **Africentric park** in the United States, located at English Park.
- A municipally owned and operated **skateboard park**. Staff and local skateboarders designed the Dodge Skateboard Park, built in 1990, with input from world-class skateboarder Tony Hawk and his father, Frank Hawk.
- The **Center without Walls** program, which brings recreation programming to seniors using available facilities.
- An indoor **high-ropes challenge course** at the Franklin Park Adventure Center, one of three in the United States.
- The **Indian Village Camp**, with outdoor educational programs for school-age children focusing on environmental discovery.
- Many more **unique places**, opportunities, and services to explore.

## CRPD STRUCTURE

The CRPD is governed by a **Recreation and Parks Commission**, which consists of nine commission members. The following is a brief overview of the current CRPD structure, which serves the Columbus community.

### Administrative Division

The Administrative Division **supports CRPD's mission** of providing high-quality recreation and park programs and services to the community. Key sections included in this

division are Fiscal, Safety, Human Resources, and Development. Other administrative areas include Information Systems, Safety, the Warehouse Operation, Visitor Services, and Media Relations. As of March 2002, there were 41 full-time staff and three part-time staff in the Administrative Division.

#### ■ Fiscal Section

The Fiscal Section provides leadership, management, and support for the department's budget, working with the department's budget and revenue teams. This section provides management and support for the warehouse operation, purchasing, and the accounting functions that include accounts payable and receivable, and revenues.

#### ■ Safety Section

The Safety Section provides training to employees, oversees the purchase of safety equipment, and monitors the CRPD Safety Manual.

#### ■ Human Resources Section

This Section operates as the caretakers of the CRPD's most valuable resource: its employees.

#### ■ Development Section

This section works with all divisions and sections of the department to increase the financial and personnel resources and to promote a positive image in the community. The major components of this section are Marketing, Grants, Sponsorships, Volunteers, and Private Leisure Assistance for Youth (P.L.A.Y.), the program that provides grants for children from financially challenged families to participate in CRPD fee-based programs

Five staff members work full time, and one staff member works part time. Staff in this section, who apply for a wide variety of grants and sponsorships for various programs, also coordinate park cleanups, Adopt-a-Park efforts, and volunteer efforts for numerous special events. This section does fund-raising, keeps the community informed, and promotes the department to the community through a variety of marketing efforts.

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## Columbus Municipal Golf Division

Conveniently located around Columbus' I-270 outer belt, the **seven golf courses within the division**—Airport, Champions, Mentel Memorial, Raymond Memorial, Turnberry, Walnut Hill, and Wilson— host more than 300,000 golf rounds annually. The seven golf courses offer a great product, excellent service, and competitive pricing. As of March 2002, there were 39 full-time staff and 140 part-time staff in the Columbus Municipal Golf Division.

**Golf is the only CRPD division that is structured to be self-sustaining.** Revenues generated through greens fees, cart rentals, tournaments, rentals, and concession sales support Golf Division operations. A portion of the revenue generated (10 percent) is dedicated to debt retirement. Enterprise funds also support the division's operational expenses.

### ■ Golf Administrative Section

This section oversees development and implementation of the turf-management programs, equipment acquisition program, and safety programs. The staff secures various services such as food concessionaires, scorecard and brochure printing, and auditing services. This section, which develops and contracts all capital improvement projects, also controls marketing, budgeting, financial reporting, and personnel matters.

### ■ Golf Operations Section

This section offers merchandise, instructional programs, golf carts, and other related golf services to central Ohio golfers. The staff supervises the food concession service, rangers, starters, outings, and tournaments. This section also promotes and conducts junior instructional golf programs and outings.

### ■ Golf Maintenance Section

This section maintains the golf courses and various buildings and grounds by mowing, applying chemicals, and operating irrigation systems. This section designs and implements various golf course improvements, maintains golf course equipment, and implements a turf-management program to ensure a quality golfing experience.

## Parks Services Division

The Parks Services Division **oversees and cares for the diverse properties and resources** throughout the City of Columbus. Sections included in this division are Planning and Design, Parks/Facility Maintenance, Forestry/Horticulture, and Natural Resources. As of August 2002, there were 120 full-time staff and 43 part-time staff in the Parks Services Division.

### ■ Planning and Design Section

This section oversees the planning and design of facilities and parks and develops the capital budget. Responsibilities include building renovations, playground upgrades, and multi-use trail development. The section also is responsible for land acquisition and the Parkland Dedication Ordinance and manages information with databases and a Geographic Information System (GIS).

### ■ Parks/Facility Maintenance Section

Staff provide professional grounds and facilities maintenance services across the city's 220 square miles. Hundreds of sites are serviced, including parks, playgrounds, lakes, swimming pools, recreation centers, athletic complexes, facilities, ball diamonds, bikeways, tennis and basketball courts, public gardens, signage, and wildlife management areas.

### ■ Forestry/Horticulture Section

The Ohio Revised Code requires cities to care for and control public rights-of-way. It further requires that cities keep rights-of-way open, in repair, and free of nuisance. To comply with state law, trees growing within the public right-of-way must be maintained adequately to reduce or eliminate potential conflicts with the safe use of public streets and roads.

The Forestry Section manages, maintains, and protects trees growing on public streets and in parks and other public spaces. The primary goal of the Forestry Section is to manage the urban forest efficiently so the public health, safety, and welfare are preserved. Thus, this section is responsible for trees growing on more than 2,000 miles of streets, 400 miles of alleys, and in more than 300 parks. The street tree stock is estimated at 130,000, and more than 90,000 trees currently exist in inventory.

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The horticultural crew operates two greenhouses, maintains the Topiary Park and the Park of Roses (the largest municipal rose garden in the country), and plants floral displays throughout the downtown parks and Goodale and Schiller parks.

## ■ Natural Resources Section

This section inventories parks for natural resources, and develops and implements the natural resources management plans for parks. Projects include identifying, protecting, restoring, and enhancing natural resources such as rare and endangered species, habitats, and waterways. The section also assists with planning and development as it relates to considerations for natural resources.

The Natural Resources Section also provides outdoor recreational opportunities for all ages. This section manages the Indoor Adventure Center, a full-service indoor high-ropes course; Indian Village Camp, a riverfront park with hiking, fishing, and an environmental educational center; and Walnut Bluffs Campground, a primitive camping area for groups. Experiential educational classes include nature studies, camping, canoeing, archery, Native American studies, rock climbing, kayaking, and many other outdoor recreational activities. This section also teaches environmental classes for schools and groups.

## Recreation Division

Key operations within the Recreation Division include Community Recreation, Sports Office, Special Events, Multi-generational Adult Program, Arts, Aquatics, and the Permit Section.

## ■ Community Recreation Section

**Community Recreation operates 28 neighborhood recreation centers throughout the city.** Staff members administer the city's Summer Nutrition Program, which serves free lunches at more than 160 locations.

During the summer, Community Recreation operates more than 20 **day camps**, which serve thousands of youth in central Ohio, and more than 60 supervised **playgrounds**. Community Recreation hosts a wide variety of **special events, field trips, and partner programs** such as "Life through Sports" with The Ohio State University and soccer clinics

with the Columbus Crew. Community Recreation serves the needs of **youth and families** in the community, working closely with Community Recreation Councils in each area.

This section also includes the **Therapeutic Recreation Program**, which sponsors and conducts recreational activities modified to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Therapeutic Recreation offers a broad spectrum of leisure experiences to enhance an individual's physical, social, and lifetime recreational interests. These programs include aquatic fitness classes; bowling; golf; weight training; wheelchair sports; Addressing Community-Oriented Recreational Needs (ACORN), an after-school program; and The Summer of Fun and Adventure Day Camp. Therapeutic Recreation welcomes and encourages everyone, including the non-disabled, to participate.

The Community Recreation Section has a strong **volunteer base**, which keeps this section heavily involved in community activities and in touch with the changing needs of citizens. As of March 2002, there were 183 full-time staff and 138 part-time staff in the Community Recreation Section.

## ■ Sports Office

The Sports Office plans, organizes, and coordinates sports activities, leagues, tournaments, and special events for youth and adults that provide opportunities for their physical, mental, and social needs during their leisure time.

## ■ Special Events Section

The Special Events Section provides professional event coordination assistance and resource materials to more than 50 public, private, and non-profit organizations that annually host festivals and special events in parks and on public property. This section also issues event permits, co-produces events for the city, and administers a sponsorship program for community events.

## ■ Multi-generational Adult Program (MAP)

MAP offers recreational, social, educational, and special-event programs and activities to seniors in the community. Programs and services are delivered through seven community recreation centers, the Golden Hobby Shop (a consignment sales outlet for

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senior crafters), a travel program, team sports program, and the Central Ohio Senior Olympics. The staff, which recently completed a strategic planning process, has redesigned its delivery approach and lowered the membership age to 50.

## ■ Arts Section

The Arts Section produces and presents quality visual, performing, and literary arts programs that promote the enjoyment and appreciation of the arts and help develop creative potential through exploration, education, and skill building. The section offers a wide range of program formats and curricula to diverse as well as targeted audiences, thus serving a variety of interests and skill levels.

## ■ Aquatics Section

The Aquatics Section operates the outdoor swimming pools during the summer and the indoor Aquatic Center year-round. Summer instructional classes in sailing and canoeing are also offered. Other classes and programs provided for Columbus-area residents include learn-to-swim, boating and water safety, instructor-level first-aid and CPR, lifeguarding, water aerobics, adult masters, special needs, conditioning, senior adults, and year-round competition for youth.

## ■ Permit Section

The Permit Section manages and operates five athletic complexes (basketball and volleyball rentals), eight enclosed shelter houses for rent by private groups, and four municipal marinas (Griggs Reservoir, O'Shaughnessy Reservoir, and two at the Hoover Reservoir). The section processes permits for street closures, special activities in all CRPD parks and on Columbus waterways, special rental equipment (the "showmobile," bleachers, stage, and boxing ring), and for all public and private boating. This section also rents private wedding sites. The Permit Section accepts payments for permits and for other user-fee-based programs and services (e.g., rentals, gyms, and league fees).

## The Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA)

The Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging provides programs and services for seniors and older adults in an eight-county area including

Franklin County. The agency is funded by state grants but uses the CRPD as its fiscal agent. Thus, the agency is considered a division of the CRPD.

The Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging has its own advisory council and operates independently from CRPD divisions and sections. The agency is one of the department's partners in delivering services to the community.

As of March 2002, the agency had 128 full-time staff and 12 part-time staff.

## LOCAL TRENDS RELATED TO RECREATION AND PARKS

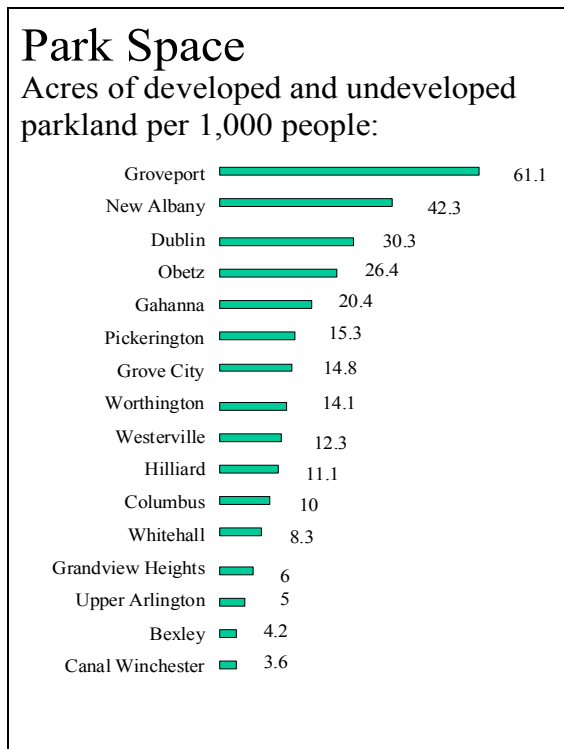
**Columbus' population reflects changes typical in other parts of the country.** For example, the population is aging and its composition is changing. Columbus' population is becoming more multicultural; this may be related to opportunities available at international businesses located in Columbus and at The Ohio State University, a large, well-known institution offering diverse programs. **These demographic shifts suggest that the CRPD needs to continue offering a wide range of programs and facilities that will serve these diverse groups.**

The City of Columbus also is experiencing **growth and urban sprawl**, a trend found in other Midwest cities. The large number of housing units within the city and a steadily growing population across Franklin County mean there is a great need for recreational opportunities in urbanized areas. **These trends place a premium on preserving and protecting the remaining open space within Columbus.**

The August 14, 2001, edition of the *Columbus Dispatch* included an article entitled, "Central Ohio Communities Scrap to Save Green Spaces," which described how suburbs and communities around Columbus are taking steps to **acquire open space. (See Figure 1-2.)** According to the article, these communities are requiring developers to give land; in some cases, developers get the option of donating money rather than land. In the future, the city can use these monetary donations to acquire additional land.

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Figure 1-2



Source: *Columbus Dispatch*, August 14, 2001.

*Columbus ranks near the bottom one-third of the list compared to its surrounding suburbs and communities in acres of developed and undeveloped parkland.*

**Meeting the demands of a growing population—and the growing demands of the public—requires growth in CRPD programs, parks, facilities, and services.** Columbus has expanded its park system through various land acquisition techniques such as purchases, easements, and donations. Over the past 10 years, donations from developers have added 500 acres to the CRPD system. Land donations, however, were not consistent and did not keep pace with development. The result is an unequal distribution of parkland. The CRPD faces a challenge in the current Parkland Dedication Ordinance, which requires only 5.5 acres per 1,000 population. **Many believe the current regulation is an insufficient tool for keeping pace with the growing public demand for parkland.**

As surrounding communities are being challenged to provide residents with open space and recreation and park opportunities, Columbus, too, will need to find ways to continue meeting this same challenge.

One measure of the competition that exists between Columbus and its neighboring communities is the amount of **per capita spending for recreation and parks**. A May 30, 1999, *Columbus Dispatch* article entitled, “For Some Cities, Parks Not Just Fun and Games,” compared recreation and parks spending per resident between Columbus and its suburbs with populations of more than 7,000. (See **Table 1-1.**)

**Table 1-1**  
**Comparison of Recreation and Parks Spending (Per Person)**

Municipality	Population (1999)	Expenses (1999)	Spending per Person
Dublin	24,976	\$6,200,900	\$248
Hilliard	21,064	\$2,311,728	\$110
Worthington	15,059	\$1,490,913	\$99
Grandview Heights	7,027	\$689,487	\$98
Westerville	34,948	\$3,403,800	\$97
Grove City	25,129	\$1,844,751	\$73
Bexley	13,293	\$811,303	\$61
Upper Arlington	35,921	\$2,164,985	\$60
Columbus	701,426	\$36,604,978	\$52
Pickerington	8,035	\$372,762	\$46
Gahanna	34,503	\$1,287,016	\$37
Whitehall	20,675	\$772,783	\$37
Reynoldsburg	31,466	\$748,258	\$24

Source: *Columbus Dispatch*, May 30, 1999.

*Compared to its surrounding suburbs, Columbus spends considerably less per capita on recreation and parks.*

As stated previously, a significant demographic shift is occurring throughout the country: **The population is aging, and with continued immigration and growth of resident immigrant populations, the ethnic makeup of the country is also evolving.**

Because of these demographic changes, the types of recreation the public is seeking in Columbus are shifting:

- For many years, **softball** has been an important component in the CRPD system. Berliner Park contains the largest softball complex in the United States and annually hosts the Christopher Columbus Softball Tournament, with more than 300 teams participating from across the country. Today, growing ethnic populations are demanding other sports such as **soccer**.
- The aging population has an increased interest in **self-directed exercise**. **Walking** is now the No. 1 fitness activity in the United States; the growing demand in Columbus strongly parallels this national

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trend. Recognizing this trend, the CRPD is rapidly moving to build a **trail system** that will feature more than 165 miles of paved trails by 2010. In fact, trails are seen as a very effective way to help residents combat another growing and alarming trend in central Ohio: significantly more cases of obesity and Type II diabetes than the national average.

**In addition, trails are used widely by people in a variety of age groups and income levels.** Trails have the potential to link residential areas to neighborhood parks and community centers. They provide a recreation opportunity to the many Columbus residents living in multifamily housing.

**These local trends demonstrate the continued and growing need for open space in Columbus.** More specifically, these trends indicate a need to preserve and protect the existing natural resources, acquire new open spaces for neighborhood parks, and preserve important ecological areas. All these actions will support a variety of passive and active activities.

## NATIONAL TRENDS RELATED TO RECREATION AND PARKS

This section of the chapter examines **national trends affecting recreation and parks** to give some perspective on trends occurring in Columbus.

### Demographic Trends

Based on information from Census 2000, the **U.S. population grew** at a record-breaking pace between 1990 and 2000. Within the past 10 years, the population increased by 32.7 million people to 281 million people, an increase of 13.2 percent. This is the largest increase in the consumer market since the start of the Baby Boomer generation. States in the West and South grew the most, with the West leading the way.

The **classification of races is changing** from what has been in place for years. People can officially identify themselves with more than one race in the census. Based on this new census question, the most common multi-racial grouping was “white and some other race.”

**The Hispanic population has grown tremendously.** In the Midwest, the Hispanic population has increased by 1.4 million people to more than 3 million people total. The United States is increasing in diversity in more ways than traditionally imagined.

Even with the increased diversity, **neighborhoods are still racially segregated.** The average white person lives in a neighborhood that is 83 percent white, 7 percent African American/black, 6 percent Hispanic and 3 percent Asian, according to John Logan of the Lewis Mumford Center at the State University of New York. The average African American/black person lives in a neighborhood that is 54 percent African American/black, and the average Hispanic person lives in a neighborhood that is 42 percent Hispanic. The Asian population is different because it is the most integrated.

**The influence of the Baby Boomer generation** is still strong. The Baby Boomers have begun to increase the number of middle-aged people. During the past 10 years, the 50-to-54 age group has expanded 55 percent. The 45-to-49 age group, which has increased by 45 percent, is the second-fastest growing age group. The aging of the Baby Boomers will continue to affect the U.S. market in many ways—from an increase in health-related products to a decrease in the workforce, which will leave many jobs unfilled.

### Land Value Trends

Discussion of **land values and “smart growth”** go hand in hand when communities begin to consider acquiring land for open space, parks, and conservation. Nationally, smart growth has become the buzzword that has begun to make an appearance in political arenas as well. To “grow smart,” a community must decide which lands to protect for recreation, community character, the conservation of natural resources, and open space. **Evidence suggests that smarter, denser growth is an economical way for communities to grow.** This is one reason why the American Planning Association, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, The National Association of Counties, and many business leaders are getting behind the smart-growth movement.



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In 1998, the Trust for Public Land funded studies that examined the relationship between **land conservation and property taxes**. One study in Massachusetts found that taxes on other properties increased in the short term after a land conservation project because conservation land was removed from the tax rolls. In the long term, however, the Massachusetts towns that had protected the most land enjoyed the lowest property tax rates—perhaps because they had less development, thus requiring fewer roads, schools, sewer and water infrastructure, and other services.

**Land conservation has other economic benefits.** In Bowdoinham, Maine, city government chose to purchase the development rights to a 307-acre dairy farm when research indicated that anticipated property tax revenues would not meet the costs of supporting the development. “Undeveloped land is the best tax break a town has,” concluded one city official.

One 1998 real estate industry analysis predicted that over the next 25 years, real estate values will rise fastest in communities that incorporate **traditional elements of successful cities**: a concentration of amenities, integration of commercial and residential districts, and a pedestrian-friendly configuration.

In Salem, Oregon, urban land next to a greenbelt was found to be worth \$1,200 more per acre than urban land 1,000 feet away. (Healing American Cities, 1994). In Boulder, Colorado, the average value of property adjacent to a greenbelt was valued 32 percent higher than a comparable home 3,200 feet away.

**These studies and others indicate the advantageous economics of open space and park planning. In general, land will not get less expensive than it is today. Thus, securing open space and recreation land now is a good investment in a growing community.**

## Economic Impact Trends

In recreation and parks management today, more agencies are tracking the economic impact of recreation facilities and events in a community. **Nationwide, parks stimulate local tourism activity.** For example, a large percentage of all visitors to Oregon

(approximately 67 percent) stopped at a state park in 1993, generating an annual economic impact to the state estimated at \$500 million. Oregon ranks 31st nationally in the amount of state parkland and ranks fourth nationally in park usage. (Oregon State Parks, 1994)

At county and local levels, **parks also stimulate tourism by providing additional activities for visitors, thereby prompting visitors to extend their stay in the area.** Eco-tourism and birding is a growing \$80-million-a-year industry that needs open space, the river corridor flyways, and preserved natural areas. In addition, local parks provide locations for community events—from fund-raising and concerts to athletic events and parades. These celebrations bring visitors into the local economy; these people spend money locally while enjoying the activities. Tucson, Arizona, for example, enjoys these benefits during a number of activities such as tennis tournaments, golf events, and sport tournaments and invitationals.

Quality of life plays a key and obvious role in decisions made by corporate site-relocation consultants and real estate executives. Recreation amenities usually rank as one of the top 10 factors when business location and retention decisions are made. In one 1989 study by Cushman and Wakefield, a global real estate firm, quality of life for employees was found to be the third most important factor in a business’s location decision.

## Partnership Trends

**Partnerships—public/public, public/private, and public/not-for-profit—are a way of the future for recreation and parks agencies across the country.** Each type of partnership requires a policy of approach different from partnerships of the past because of the outcomes that each partner expects.

**Public/public partnerships** seek to acquire a 50/50 equity level of resources that each partner provides to the relationship. It is very important that the partners share a common vision, common values, and an understanding that their relationship increases the value of their services to the community. Typical public/public partnerships include:

- City Recreation and Parks/school district;
- City Recreation and Parks/community colleges;

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- City Recreation and Parks/county park and recreation;
- City Recreation and Parks/state parks;
- City Recreation and Parks/university;
- City Recreation and Parks/surrounding cities; and
- City Recreation and Parks/other City of Columbus departments.

**Public/private partnerships** result in the public sector gaining revenue from profits of the private-sector partner. These partnerships are based on efficient businesses operating public attractions or providing services that the city does not offer. Public/private partnerships require the city to track output measurements consistently to hold the private partner accountable because the private partner is operating as an agent of the city and must adhere to a level of standard and expectations of the consumer and the city. Typical public/private partnerships for recreation and parks include:

- Golf course management of all operations, including maintenance;
- Tennis center management;
- Catering services;
- Restaurant services;
- Marina operations;
- Hospitality and conference management;
- Camping and campground services;
- Concession management at sports complexes;
- Pool maintenance; and
- Lifeguard services.

Public/private partnerships generally cover three to four years for management contracts and 10, 15, and 20 years for lease management contracts. The private partner typically invests \$2 million to \$10 million in the public attraction and requires time to gain a return on this investment.

**Public/not-for-profit partnerships** typically share the cost to provide the facility or program services. The not-for-profit typically has more flexibility to provide a service than the city. This partnership allows both partners to gain revenues or efficiencies in operations from the agreement. Depending on the amount of the investment by the not-for-profit, the partnership is based on three-, five-, 10-, or 15-year agreements. Both partners must establish a common vision and values. A good activity-based costing system is required to track and demonstrate the value that each partner is

bringing to the agreement. Examples of public/not-for-profit partnerships might include:

- City Recreation and Parks/youth or adult sport associations (both develop the game fields, with the not-for-profit operating the organization);
- City Recreation and Parks/hospital (the hospital provides the health and wellness services inside a multidimensional recreation center or fitness facility);
- City Recreation and Parks/environmental associations (often there is partnering on land trusts, environmental centers, and greenway development coordination);
- City Recreation and Parks/friends of specific attractions (the focus is on raising funds or assisting in managing the attraction); and
- City Recreation and Parks/YMCA (or boys and girls clubs or a faith community).

All three types of partnerships allow a recreation and parks department to leverage resources and build additional public advocacy and support.

## Budget Trends

The latest trend in budget development is focused on **performance**. Revenues are created from a variety of revenue streams; these are tracked against inputs, outputs, measurable outcomes, and performance levels. These levels of performance are based on what the department achieves against the dollars requested in a given budget cycle.

This system requires a recreation and parks department to implement a sound activity-based costing system to create good baseline data. The department must measure the **results** of the products and services against a set of **performance measures** such as the following:

- Customer satisfaction levels that need to be met;
- Cost per experience achieved;
- Capacity levels obtained;
- Cost per unit/delivery of a service;
- Retention levels obtained; and
- Partnering resources leveraged.

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In the United States, city recreation and park organizations are designing facilities to attract wider demographic groups from a broader distance and are charging market-rate user fees. Thus, total operating budgets for these city recreation and park organizations now incorporate **user-fee revenues** ranging from 35 percent to 50 percent. This approach is different from a traditional community center, which charges nominal fees and serves a smaller demographic group.

## Management Trends

Management trends are moving away from cylinder forms of management to matrix management. **Matrix management focuses on pushing more decisions to lower levels** of supervision in the organization. This allows work teams to exist between divisions so that results can be achieved without pushing decision making up to management-level supervisors. Work teams have outcomes to be achieved; managers focus on achieving outcomes and reducing bureaucracy vs. micromanaging details in the operation. Supervisors work in the field and lead many of the work teams.

Conversely, in cylinder management, all decisions are forced up to various levels of the organization based on the magnitude of the decision. Before moving forward with a decision, a division must seek approval. Bureaucracy is heightened and not reduced.

Other management trends focus on **outsourcing inefficient operations** to a business that can provide a higher quality of services at a lower price. Services often outsourced in other organizations throughout the United States include:

- Golf management;
- Tennis management;
- Horticulture management;
- Turf management;
- Construction management;
- Forestry management;
- Custodial management;
- Safety management;
- Concession management;
- Marina management;
- Trash collection;
- Wellness and fitness management;
- Preschool services; and
- Aquatics management.

Whenever a city recreation and parks organization provides services internally, there are true **direct and indirect costs**. Sometimes a city can provide these services at a competitive cost compared to the private sector—and sometimes it cannot. Thus, before determining whether a service should be provided internally or outsourced, a city should consider and evaluate carefully its direct and indirect costs for providing these services. A Request for Proposal (RFP) process will help establish which service-delivery method will produce the highest level of service for the least cost.

## Recreation Facility Trends

**A focus on multidimensional design and intergenerational use in one setting is a very popular trend.** Examples include large, multidimensional recreation centers and aquatic centers that can serve the entire family.

Other trends include:

- Golf learning centers targeted to youth and beginning golfers;
- Skateboard parks;
- Dog parks;
- Outdoor adventure centers;
- Inline skate parks;
- Sports complexes with six, 12, or 20-plus courts or fields in one setting;
- Basketball academies;
- Health and wellness centers; and
- Recreational ice facilities.

When available, these types of facilities are usually open 90 to 105 hours a week and can be high revenue producers. Such facilities also have the capability to cover operating and capital costs.

## Recreation Program Trends

Recreation trends include supplying **quality** over quantity, offering **intergenerational** activities, pricing services based on **benefits**, and providing **short-term** programs.

- **Senior programs**—Such programs focus on providing different levels of senior services by target generation—50 to 60, 60 to 70, 70 to 80, and 80+. Each ten-year target group has separate needs and abilities. Most seniors feel 15 years

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younger than they are, and programs need to reflect that feeling.

- **Family programs**—Parents and children participate in activities together instead of the parent observing the child. Programs include sports, arts, special events, wellness and fitness, trips, outdoor and environmental programs, aquatics, high-end computer games, and life-skill courses.
- **Roller sports**—Activities include in-line skating, hockey, skateboarding, BMX tracks, and cycling.
- **Teen services**—These include after-school, evening, and weekend social spaces for music, dancing, computer games, computer learning, co-ed activities, and simply “hanging out.”
- **Outdoor adventure**—Programs include canoeing, sailing, fishing, kayaking, white water rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking, and camping.
- **Sports development programs**—These are targeted to skill camps, tournaments, and specialty leagues for youth, teens, and adults. Co-ed sports programs for teens in soccer, softball, basketball, and volleyball are very popular, as are sports for older adults. Sports for women and girls are growing.

## ABOUT THE NEXT CHAPTER

**Chapter 1: Overview** provided background information on the City of Columbus and the CRPD. **Chapter 2: Demographic/Community Overview** lays the foundation for the master plan by documenting the locations of existing populations and their different needs, and describing the community in detail.

